

Classification of Different Types of Wool and the Breeds of Sheep that produce that

ancestors. Many kinds of bighorn sheep live in North America.

Breeds of Domestic Sheep

Domestic sheep have been slowly and carefully changed from their wild ancestors. Originally, the wild sheep were tamed for the sake of their hides and milk. They were also used to carry burdens. Very early they became important for their fleece. The coarse hair that covered the wild sheep was replaced by a soft coat of wool through breeding. Only in the last 200 years have breeders developed sheep primarily for their meat.

Sheep are classified into five groups, depending upon their fleece. These are fine wool, long wool, crossbred wool, medium wool, and coarse wool. The coarse wool group is of little importance.

Fine-Wooled Sheep. Most of our fine-wooled sheep originated from the Spanish Merino. These sheep were raised in Spain as far back as history has been written. Spanish Merino sheep were greatly prized. The Spanish government forbade taking them out of the country but many were smuggled into Germany, France, and England. It was in these other countries that the Merino was developed into the modern type of sheep.

There are more sheep with Merino blood than any other breed. American Merino sheep have white faces and legs, and are thickly covered with fine wool down to their toes and noses. Rams usually have horns.

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Kind of wool:

A. Fine Wool: 2

1. Spanish Merino
2. American Merino

Rambouillet - short fleece

B. Long Wool:

Shawl, Carpet

C. Crossbred Wool:

D. Medium Wool:

Rambouillet

E. Coarse Wool:

Wool for work

References: 1. World Book Volume 17, pp 306--307